

Tuesday, July 27, 1999

Please do not allow history to repeat itself!

Having been a broadcaster for over 37 years, I am all too familiar with the 80-90 docket of the 1980's. Broadcasters were led to believe that the 80-90 docket would allow thousands of new stations to go on the air for use by minorities, women, religious groups, etc. The end result was too many stations in the marketplace for small market stations to remain in business.

The FCC subsequently loosened radio ownership restrictions in order to bolster the industry. A culmination of this was the lifting of the national radio ownership restrictions and further loosening of the local restrictions in the Telecom Act of 1996.

Today, many of the 80-90 docket radio stations are no longer on the air. Of the ones that still exist, only a tiny fraction are owned by minorities, women, religious groups, etc. 80-90 was a failure, especially when you consider most of the 80-90 stations are now owned by huge corporations. Some of these large conglomerates now own 400 or more stations. This totally defeats the purpose of "home town" stations designed to serve the local community, but it is a problem created by the FCC and deregulation of the industry.

Small market, independently owned stations, are still hanging on and doing a good job serving their local communities. Now, however, we are being told that MM Docket 99-25 will allow perhaps thousands of low power FM stations to go on the air and will be owned primarily by minorities, women, religious groups, etc. HELLO! Does this sound familiar?

Low power FM will cause interference to existing stations and they will certainly harm development of the new In-Band-On-Channel ("IBOC") digital radio. The great myth of Low Power FM is that radio today is too bland. But I submit to you that the 13,000 stations that already exist offer a plethora of programming options for listeners. There are formats solely devoted to news, talk, business, sports, children, religion, gospel, oldies, classic rock, jazz, country, easy listening, ethnic, and every other format that can be conceived by the mind of man.

If MM Docket 99-25 passes, perhaps the radio industry should do what one small market owner recently suggested. Let's sell out to Bill Gates. It was stated that Bill Gates could buy all 13,000 stations in existence and run the same thing on all of them without making a dent in his financial status.

Although many of us in small-market radio don't make a lot of money we still do it as a labor of love. Please don't allow the last life-blood of this industry to be drained away by crowding the airwaves with a new flurry of low power stations that can't be policed by the FCC. Look at the pirate stations currently operating in this country; There's too many for the FCC to keep up with. How can the FCC regulate thousands of newly licensed low power stations. It would be a nightmare.

I know many people believe the Golden Rule means "He who has the gold - Rules." Don't let this happen to small market radio again. Remember the 80-90 Docket of the 1980's and vote NO on MM Docket 99-25.

Best Regards,

Glenn A. McNish Sr.